

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A valve assembly for venting pressurized gases generated from within an enclosed package during a heating of the package, said valve assembly comprising:

a tubular body having an open end opposite a closed end, and a side wall extending radially from said open end to said closed end, said side wall having an inner wall surface so as to define a recess between said open and closed ends, said closed end having an aperture and a planar surface, ~~wherein~~ said planar surface extends fully between opposite sides of said inner wall surface of said side wall, and wherein said planar surface ~~includes~~ includes an aperture for ~~operable~~ to venting ~~vent~~ the pressurized gases therethrough;

a retaining member ~~operative for snap fit engagement with said inner wall surface~~ disposed within said recess of said tubular body, said retaining member having a retaining member body, ~~wherein~~ said retaining member body is spaced from said planar surface of said closed end of said tubular body; and

a membrane element formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform when the package is being heated, ~~wherein~~ said membrane is positioned between said planar surface of said closed end and said retaining member so as to cover said aperture and maintain a substantially sealed environment within the package, ~~wherein~~ a portion of said membrane element is displaceable from said aperture of said planar surface to allow pressurized gases to pass through said aperture.

2. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said tubular body includes a flanged portion defined along said open end thereof.

3. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 2, wherein said tubular body includes a rim formed along at least a portion of said inner wall surface of said side wall so as to retain the retaining member within the recess.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 2, wherein said tubular body is cylindrically shaped.

6. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 5, wherein said flange portion is annular and extends radially outwardly from said tubular body.

7-8 (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said retaining member has at least one concave edge that facilitates a removal of said retaining member from said recess.

10. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said closed end includes a plurality of apertures for venting the pressurized gases therethrough.

11. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein each of said apertures has a substantially sector shape with a diameter of 1.8 mm and a length of 2.6 mm.

12. (Original) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein the retaining member includes at least one rib extending between opposite sides thereof.

13. (Currently amended) A package comprising:
a sealing film having a continuous inner edge defining a sealing film aperture;
a valve assembly sealingly secured along said inner edge of said sealing film aperture, said valve assembly having:

a tubular body having an open end opposite a closed end, and a side wall extending radially from said open end to said closed end, said side wall having an inner wall surface so as to define a recess between said open and closed ends, said closed end having an aperture and a planar surface, wherein said planar surface extends fully between opposite sides of said inner wall surface of said side wall, and wherein said planar surface includes an aperture for venting operative to vent the pressurized gases therethrough;

~~a retaining member operative for snap-fit engagement with said inner wall surface disposed within said recess of said tubular body, said retaining member having a retaining member body, wherein said retaining member body is spaced from said planar surface of said closed end of said tubular body; and~~

~~a membrane element formed from cast polypropylene so as to not permanently deform when the package is being heated, said membrane element positioned between said planar surface of said closed end of said tubular body and said retaining member so as to cover~~

said aperture and maintain a substantially sealed environment within the package, wherein a portion of said membrane element is displaceable from said aperture of said planar surface to allow pressurized gases to pass through said aperture.

14. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 13, wherein said tubular body includes a flanged portion defined along said open end thereof.

15. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 14, wherein said tubular body includes a rim formed along at least a portion of said inner wall surface of said side wall so as to engage the retaining member within the recess.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 14, wherein said tubular body is cylindrically shaped.

18. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 17, wherein said flange portion is annular and extends radially outwardly said tubular body.

19-20 (Cancelled)

21. (Previously presented) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 13, wherein said closed end includes a plurality of apertures for venting the pressurized gases therethrough.

22. (Currently amended) The valve assembly as set forth in claim 1, wherein said membrane element is displaced from said closed end in response to pressure within the package ~~exceeds~~exceeding a pressure ranging between 4-7.5 mbars allowing pressurized gases to pass through said aperture.